2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

stringy and bitter to the taste, but the fact that these plants grow wild also tends to make them despised. For instance the wild orchid (*icikanda*) gathered by the children in September is considered with special contempt. A passing Lunda bragging to some Bemba villagers about the superior wealth and civilization of his own people, clinched the argument by saying, 'In our country we just divorce our wives if they serve *icikanda* relish, whereas yours have to cook it every day.' The burrowing cricket (*nyense*) and the mice, moles, or small birds which little boys trap are also despised. 'Food for children and for women in the hunger months' is an expression often used of such foods with an expression of contempt.

European foods are used only in the villages round white settlements and then apparently entirely for their kudos value, or else their ease in preparation.[1] Such articles are chiefly limited to tea, coffee, sugar, bread, and sardines. They seemed to me to be eaten as extras, used for purposes of entertainment or display, rather than an essential part of the diet, but the habit may have become more common since my visit to the area in 1934. Then clerks and native storekeepers in the Kasama townships used to be carried trays of tea in the middle of the morning by their wives, and in a neighbouring village I have seen four young men, after eating their ordinary meal of porridge and relish, sit down to share a tin of sardines on a table spread in full view of the community and ornamented with empty whisky bottles. They were described as having a 'sundowner'. In the same year a successful dance club run by an enterprising native returned from the mines, sold lemonade at 3*d*. a glass (i.e. a whole day's wages) and scones made from white flour in preference to supplying beer. It is purely want of money which prevents the extension of such customs in the modern type of village.

Magico-Religious Attitudes to Food.

(*a*) *Food taboos.* The whole question of food taboos has bulked very largely in anthropological literature from the earliest days. Such ritual restrictions on diet seem to have struck the attention of European observers immediately, and there is no doubt that where a particular class of food is tabooed permanently to a whole community or to a large section of it, such as a clan, age-grade, or

[1] Bread is liked chiefly for the latter reason I think.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

cloth or blanket during the past year,[1] whether through a gift from a son in work at the mines, the payment at a daughter's marriage, or the sale of beer. One had been able to employ two young boys to cut trees for him through the generosity of an absent nephew. For the rest, these older men lived from harvest to harvest without using money at all, and their position is typical of their contemporaries all over the district. The four men employed at Shiwa Ndandu were regularly earning 10*s.* a month, while most of the others had worked for two to three months at a time locally to earn their tax and to make small extra sums for clothes and other European goods. Three had used, or were using, paid labour to make their gardens. One, an unusually intelligent cultivator, had paid his tax by the sale of vegetables to Europeans, and three had made a few extra shillings with beer. It is doubtful whether on an average the men of this village handled more than 25*s.* a head during the year, of which 10*s.* went in tax.[2] In a community with fewer opportunities for work locally, this sum would probably be smaller.

As regards its food-supply, the village was in a fairly satisfactory position according to Bemba standards. Its gardens had not been destroyed by locusts, and at the recent harvest the average figure for the contents of its sixteen granaries was 2,804 lb. of millet. At the time of observation, about three months after the reaping and storing of the grain, the supply was still adequate and caused the people no concern. Beer was brewed seven times during thirty-two days and two gourds were brought into the village as presents. These figures show that the millet-supply was quite sufficient, and if the people went short of *ubwali* it was because the women could not or would not cook it, and not because of its scarcity.

The relish situation was quite different, and it soon appeared that the provision of *umunani* was the chief difficulty of the housewife at this particular season of the year. The garden vegetables were over. The mushrooms would not appear for another two months, and though there were stored legumes, &c., to fall back on, there were such small quantities of these available that housewives were afraid to use them frequently for fear they would not last till the end of the season. This left nothing for relish but wild spinaches or *icikanda* orchids—food that had to be hunted

[1] At a cost of about 5*s.*

[2] The tax has since been reduced to 7*s.* 6*d.* per annum.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

pots, and the same number of baskets and a couple of blankets would be the usual equipment. Few men own more than one cloth, or an outfit of European clothes such as shorts and a shirt, or the tattered remnants of these. Women rarely have more than one frock or cloth. Besides these, the people treasure certain hereditary objects of no economic value such as the bow of the man, the bead girdle (*umushingo*) of the woman, and certain beads, ivory bracelets, or anklets. A few Bemba own goats and sheep, and many keep chickens and pigeons. All these possessions are individually owned and bequeathed to descendants according to rule, i.e. the heirlooms described above descend to the legal heirs, the maternal nephews or grandsons. Any personal property made by a man, or acquired by his efforts, may go to his own sons, his wife, or his sister, as the case may be. His clothes or money, or his hut, for the year or two it remains habitable, go to his wife or his children, and the working pots and baskets to the wife or the sister.

If the material possessions of the Bemba are few in number, they are also impermanent. Few objects can be reckoned as lasting more than four or five years. It is impossible to protect the wood of houses and furniture from the ravages of white ants, and the same applies to baskets, mats, and most of the other contents of an ordinary hut. Even sacred relics guarded with the utmost care seem to have been frequently destroyed in the past by insects or fire, and most of the surviving heirlooms are those of iron or copper, ivory, or a few beads. This in itself affects the people's attitude to property, and the social values associated with its accumulation.

To turn to present-day conditions, it must be realized that a money income is not yet a universal measure of wealth in this community. The amount of money the individual Bemba handles each year is very small. I put it at 15*s.* to £1 on an average (cf. Chap. X). Money can only be obtained by work for Europeans or occasionally for fellow Africans. The average unskilled wage was 7*s.* 6*d.* a month during my stay, and the opportunities for regular employment in the country were very few.[1] Practically only the domestic servants and clerks could be considered as regular wage earners, and these were naturally a very small proportion of the community. A certain amount of money is said to

[1] Cf. the figures for absentee labour given in Chapter I. It was reckoned in 1934 that in the Kasama area only 30 per cent. could have earned their tax of 10*s.* locally.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

be brought or sent back from the mines, but it is difficult to reckon how much.[1] From superficial observations it seemed that most natives returning from the mines brought clothes and other European goods with them, not money, and that the circulation of cash from this source had very much decreased since the cessation of recruiting with its associated system of deferred pay in 1931. Grain is bought by the Government and mission schools in the area, and a few objects like baskets or mats are sold by craftsmen, but the total sources of money revenue are still exceedingly limited, and anything like a persistent accumulation of money does not exist, and could not exist whatever the people's economic ambitions.

Conceptions of Wealth.

If, then, in the old days a man's material possessions were no measure of his wealth, on what did his economic privileges or status in society depend, and what were the chief ambitions he pursued? Roughly speaking, the aim of every Bemba was to secure rights over the service of others, whether slaves, relatives, fellow villagers, or subjects. This would enable him to make slightly larger gardens than his fellows, or in the case of a chief, to form a band of retainers and counsellors and an army. With the economic privileges he gained through their labour were correlated political position and status. In fact the latter were considered the more important assets. The employer, if he may so be called, gained not only labour for his garden, and warriors for his army, but the prestige of a large following. 'How did you recognize a man of rank or wealth [*umukankala*] in the old days?' I once asked an old courtier of Citimukulu. 'By his clothes?' 'No! not by his clothes. He only got cloth if the chief gave it to him from time to time. Otherwise he wore bark-cloth like every one else. You would know him by his little band of followers [*kalibumba kakwe*], his kinsmen, or the slaves he had.' And this is a statement that can be made with equal truth of a chief to-day, of a European, or indeed any one in authority. 'He came with a lot of people' is a comment which is always received with respect, and I believe the fact that so many natives employed at the mines pay quite a high proportion of their wages on hiring servants is

[1] The Merle Davis Commission estimates that one-fifth of the total earnings of urban natives returned to the rural areas in N. Rhodesia. *Modern Industry and the African*, 1933, p. 184.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

554 a reflection of this desire to build up a following.[1] 'Why do you pay 5*s*. a month to three boys to work for you when you only earn 60*s*. yourself?' I once asked a mine clerk. He answered simply: 'Because I am a clerk. I am not an ordinary man.'

• [465]

Bemba ambitions are shaped accordingly. In the old days a young man could only hope to rise by attaching himself by marriage to an *umukankala*, by joining the village of a rich relative, a grandfather, a maternal uncle, or more certainly still by currying favour with a chief. This latter he could do by putting himself under the protection of a kinsman who lived at the capital, and joining the ranks of the *bakalume ba mfumu* (boys or pages of the chief) and doing odd services for the *mfumu*. Thus he obtained food, personal favours, and finally advancement, and possibly a wife. Hence the wide use of charms to secure the goodwill of the *mfumu* and to make oneself appear agreeable to him.[2] This is still true to a large extent to-day.

As distinct from the youth, the aim of a middle-aged man, who had already married and risen in the social scale, was to attract as large a following as possible of his kinsmen, and ultimately to found a village himself. His married daughters and their husbands were more or less bound to live with him in any case, but more distant relatives were only attracted to do so if they liked or respected him or felt it to be to their economic advantage.

624 554 Besides this, a prospective headman had to have the support of his chief, whether he desired to form a new village or merely to inherit the position held by one of his kinsmen. Appointment to offices such as headmanships was limited to men of senior age and descent of a lineage group or even a local branch of a clan; but of those eligible, only men who had won the favours of the chief could expect to succeed. To achieve the position of headman a man had to wait in patience, plot, plan, and try to ingratiate himself with the hospitality he offered and to impress his fellows with his *mano* (good sense). This aim holds good to this day, and to this purpose the ambitious man gives himself entirely, some-

[1] The need for firewood fetched at some distance from the compound is of course another factor.

[2] *Umuti wa cisense*. Cf. L. P. Mair's account of the social ambitions of the Ganda: 'To the Muganda the political system of his tribe was not only the machine which dispensed justice and organised the execution of the king's command, but a social ladder which every man of ambition might hope to climb.' *An African People in the Twentieth Century*, 1934, p. 173.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

frocks. Two had worn out and two were in use, but the fifth remained. Driven to desperation by the food shortage, she walked to the Chambesi river and exchanged her 5*s.* frock for a 2*s.* basket of fish. On her return thirty miles to her home, she immediately sold some of the fish for a small quantity of millet (again at less than its current price) and with the millet made two gourds of beer. One she sold for a shilling and the other she and her relatives drank. In all such cases the Bemba in the hunger season seem to walk huge distances, make bad bargains on sudden impulses, and then squander the products of the expedition.

Near Kasama, where there are natives living in the white township or its neighbourhood, the Bemba lack of trading ability is shown even more strikingly. Here there are a number of men employed by Europeans, unable to make gardens either because they have been too short a time in the district, because they have left their wives behind, or because cultivated land is short. They have to buy food from the surrounding villages with money or with goods.[1] They prefer the latter because it is more economical: 'Salt is better because you can give a little at a time. Besides, women often want salt in a hurry and they agree to sell you what you want.' But here again, in 1934 at any rate, the buyers had to spend money on snuff, cloth, or salt without knowing which the sellers would happen to want that day, and there was no fixed rendezvous at which purchaser and seller could be certain of meeting. The wives of the domestic servants in one compound I knew used to get up at five in the morning and go along the different country roads hoping to waylay the incoming villagers before they reached the town. Quite frequently they came back empty-handed after waiting some hours because the sellers had gone the other way! Want of leadership and a rapidly changing situation may explain this lack of organization, but surely no tribe with the slightest tradition of trading would have failed to make some arrangement by which the sellers and purchasers of goods could be certain of meeting.

Bemba, who are recognized as being more skilled than their fellows at crafts—pot-making, basket- or mat-weaving, or the

[1] A clerk of a steady economical type estimated that he spent 6*s.* 2*d.* a month for himself and his family out of a 16*s.* wage, while two Government messengers' budgets came to 5*s.* and 7*s.* 6*d.* respectively. A cook, known to be a prodigal spender, as he called it, 'wasted' £1 a month on food and beer for himself and his two wives.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

the case of the men and 3·5 days for the women.[2] These labourers were drawn from 81 villages out of 160 showing that it is very far from true that every Bemba works for his chief at the present time. Added to this the number of adult males at work outside the territory means that the supply of available labour is almost halved. Two small chieftainesses, Canda we Eiya and Mulenga, complained that they could get no gardens made for them without the support of their territorial chiefs, and in May 1933 Mwamba, one of the biggest of the latter, had chosen the site for his capital, but could not get sufficient labour to build it until the copper slump sent men home to their villages. Citimukulu himself constantly grumbled that he could not get his gardens made, and even his band of personal followers and singers was very much reduced.

It is nevertheless a fact that the chief's rights are still recognized, even if he cannot always enforce them. Where money payments are substituted for tribute labour—and this only takes place very occasionally—it is an accepted principle that the *mfumu* should pay below the current rate. Thus in March 1934 Citimukulu summoned two bricklayers to work *umulasa* for him, offering them 2*s*. 6*d*. a week instead of 7*s*. 6*d*., the current wage, and this sum was considered generous. Chiefs also pay the tax of some of their followers, in return for work done, and in this case the latter usually get food and other court perquisites, and do an indefinite amount of labour. I saw Nkula pay a 4*s*. court fine for two subjects who were unable to find the money, but he ordered them to build him a house in return, for which the current pay was 10*s*. The legitimate claims of the chief to service are still perfectly well recognized in compromise arrangements of this kind.

It is also obvious that no system has yet been devised as a substitute for *umulasa* labour. To pay even the small force of labour Citimukulu employed during the period in which I took notes, he would have required nearly £56 at the current rate of wages out of a total annual salary of £60 for all personal and tribal expenses. So that it must be acknowledged that even if the *umulasa* system

[2] hoeing village beds 126; fetching fish and other foods 76; cleaning paths 96; digging up ground-nuts or Livingstone potato beds 68; reaping 12. TOTAL 970 men-days.
For the building of the chief's new huts in a new village 807, including 421 spent making a brick court-house, as against 386 to build 10 huts of the ordinary type. 174 men-days were spent by the women in white-washing or making cement floors of the same houses.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

622 657 643 the case of a chief who was plainly a poor organizer, but the art of chieftainship is difficult to practise even in the most advantageous conditions at the present time. A servant of the late Nkula, who was a chief of far greater ability than the Paramount, told me ruefully that his master no longer fed all the inhabitants of the capital as he used to. 'He just sends me round the village to sit with the elders of each division (*icitente*). If I hear so much grumbling that I am afraid they will begin to leave the capital, I tell the chief and he sends them what food he has.'

Such failures of the chief to provide for his subjects, little though he may be accountable for them, insensibly weaken his prestige at a time when the Government is most anxious to build on that attribute. The tradition of the generous king survives as a standard against which the modern ruler is constantly measured, and measured to his disadvantage. Despite all evidence to the contrary, the Bemba commoners continue to believe that their chiefs could give them more if they only tried. They make such remarks as, 'These are not chiefs at all! Look how much Citimukulu Ponde or Citapankwa gave our forefathers', and these memories actually determine the prestige given to a chief at the present day.

643 ●465 If it be asked whether the Bemba chiefs could not substitute money payments for *umulasa* dues, the answer is simply that their salaries are not large enough. The Paramount gets £60 a year, of which in 1934 he spent £22. 12*s*. on clothing his wives and family, £15. 10*s*. on paying and clothing his messengers, personal servants, and band, and £2. 10*s*. on cloth for the ancestral shrines, thus leaving for personal needs, demands from relatives, ammunition, &c. the sum of £18. 10*s*. 6*d*. or only 30*s*. a month.[1]

622 465 The other big chiefs have even smaller salaries, e.g. Mwamba has £50, Nkula £40, and some of the sub-chiefs as little as £10 a year. Added to this fundamental difficulty, the Bemba chiefs do not consider their salaries as funds to be used for the benefit of the tribe. They are something new, a sort of unexpected windfall given as a sign of the Government's favour. They are not yet part of the warp and woof of tribal organization. The food he gets, the chief distributes, the money he does not.[2] Nor does it seem that the newly instituted tribal treasuries perform any of the functions

[1] Cf. my 'Tribal Government in transition', *Journal of the African Society*, vol. xxxiv, no. cxxxvii, 1935, for a discussion on this whole question.

[2] To a body of discontented councillors Citimukulu explained, 'If I had any elephant tusks, you know I should give them to you.'

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

of the old dues on land, since they are to be used for new developments such as road-building, schools, clinics, &c., and not to institute paid service for unpaid labour dues.[1]

Here, as in many cases of adjustment between black and white, there appear to be two difficulties—the European's failure to understand the tribal machine, and a fundamental difference in point of view. 'Forced Labour' has an ugly sound to our ears. The claim of the African chief to be landlord of his whole territory is apt to strike the European as almost fantastic, and the administrator often feels it his duty to protect the natives of any particular district against any exorbitant demands their rulers may base upon it. To the white philanthropist it appears fundamentally unjust that a man should have to work without pay, at the arbitrary command of another, and that his right to live and cultivate in an area should depend on his willingness to work for the political head of that district. It is taken for granted that the *umulasa* system should be abandoned as soon as possible, as suiting ill with European conceptions of justice and the individual method of landholding which it is hoped the Bemba will finally adopt when they have been taught fixed methods of cultivation.[2]

At the same time, the discouragement of the *umulasa* system,

[1] The annual revenue of the Bemba from the new treasury scheme has been reckoned at £1,303, of which £995 goes in salaries to chiefs, &c. The recent Pim report recommends that 20 per cent. of the native tax should be remitted to the native treasury instead of 10 per cent. as at present. Op. cit., pp. 184, 190.

[2] As far as abstract justice is concerned, there would seem to be little to choose between black and white conceptions. The European attitude to unpaid service prevents the Government from approving of the *umulasa* system, and also made it impossible in 1933 for the administration to accept service in lieu of money during an economic slump, in spite of the frequent requests of Bemba chiefs that their people should be allowed to work off their tax in this way. This seemed incredible to the native. His traditional obligations to his chief were, after all, paid in commodities which were easily available—food and labour—whereas the Government demands for a money tax made it necessary for him to leave his territory in most instances to look for work. Otherwise, he suffered imprisonment, in which he did a month's unpaid labour for the Government, and was released, still owing arrears of tax! (By the tax-relief scheme of 1935, tax defaulters were allowed to work off their tax at slightly below the current wages, on public works.)

European concern at an institution which binds natives to work for their chief in return for the right of cultivation seems also inconsistent, since the squatter system of land-tenure is the only means by which a large portion of the native inhabitants of South Africa claim any right to land to cultivate at all, and, in the latter case, the natives work a legal minimum, varying from ninety days to six months a year in return for the right to settle. Added to which, the Bemba is free to go where he pleases without reference to his chief, whereas the South